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SUBJECT: AFTER THE MONTENEGRIN REFERENDUM: CALM
BUT COMPLICATED - CORRECTED COPY

BELGRADE 00000814 001.2 OF 002

11. (SBU) Summary: Despite a blanket refusal by the GOS until now to discuss the practicalities of future inter-republic relations if Montenegrins vote for independence, several senior GOS and GOM officials have indicated they anticipate a calm, but complicated transition after the referendum. Although we would see plenty of confusion in the event of a pro-independence vote, we do not expect significant disruption of the government or command of military forces. Nonetheless, strong antipathy between both sides and their determination to promote their respective position regardless of the outcome could complicate next steps. In case of a "grey zone" result, the GoM has sent signals it could pull out of the State Union structures, a boycott that would hamstring the already largely dysfunctional State Union. End Summary.

12. (SBU) In a private conversation with the Ambassador on May 17, GOS Minister of Justice Stojkovic said that if the pro-independence vote prevails, the Serbian Parliament would have to pass amendments (with the force of "constitutional laws") to the Law on Serbian Government ministries creating at least two extra ministries ? defense and foreign affairs ? even before the new Constitution is adopted in Serbia. The three member SaM Supreme Defense Council which is the collective Commander-and-Chief of the SaM armed forces consisting of members from both republics would also have to be restructured. The GoS has not been willing to pronounce itself on how it will handle either outcome. It has refused our offer to discuss clarifying a stable post-referendum process while privately reassuring us that everything will remain calm and there will be no significant problems. The prime minister and president's office, the justice minister and our contacts in the MFA have all to some degree assured us that there will be no dramatic showdowns.

13. (U) Earlier this week, EU Foreign Ministers called on Belgrade and Podgorica to begin a dialogue on their future relations immediately following the referendum, regardless of the outcome. Brussels also publicly acknowledged for the first time that independence would not hinder or slow Montenegro's drive for EU membership, undercutting a critical key argument of the pro-Union bloc.

¶4. (SBU) If it wins the referendum, the GOM has indicated that it will move forward on independence as quickly as possible, but will be patient and pragmatic in order to assist a smooth transition. It has communicated to the USG and other internationalists that it is ready to adopt an international persona immediately. Nonetheless, it remains wary that Belgrade will attempt to stall secession negotiations, which the GoM sees as necessary only to deal with "formalities" and a few "unsolved issues." The GoM will not wait long to declare independence -- certainly not past July 13 (Montenegro's historical independence day). According to two close advisors to Serbian PM Kostunica advisor, Belgrade anticipates a protracted secession discussion with Podgorica in the event of independence, and that the GOS would not be in the mood to compromise. Kostunica himself told the Ambassador that he would accept the outcome of the referendum and will be prepared to "re-model" the relationship between Montenegro and Serbia after the referendum.

¶5. (SBU) The GoM leadership has repeatedly signaled that, while it predicts a clear victory for independence, it will not hesitate to capitalize on a "grey zone" result. It is very likely that they will withdraw Montenegrin cadres from State Union institutions after a "grey zone" result, either shortly after the referendum or following a failed effort to negotiate a union of independent states with Serbia.

¶6. The SaM Foreign Ministry is largely a Serbian artifact already; although many SaM embassies would see their Montenegrin COMs depart. We believe that neither republic would take

BELGRADE 00000814 002.2 OF 002

irresponsible steps endangering the defense forces, especially given that command of the military is already effectively divided between the republics. The greatest impact would be on the SaM Council of Ministers and parliament. While assigned a generally marginal function, SAM institutions have passed a small number of laws of interest to the international community and the USG (e.g., the PIFWC asset freeze), and they are currently needed to formally fill gaps in the leadership of the Defense and Foreign Affairs ministries and ratify international agreements. Essentially, the State Union could move from dysfunctional to nonfunctional, until either a new relationship between Belgrade and Podgorica could be agreed - or Belgrade abandons the State Union as well.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: In the case of independence, legal and political confusion and uncertainty will certainly ensue. The US and other international actors (especially the EU) could play an important role in maintaining calm and responsible dialog between the republics as they sort out the myriad items they would have to address. The need for international community intervention, especially from the EU, will be even more urgent in the case of a grey zone as the two republics move to re-define their relationship.

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